

**Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Division of Special Education
SPECIAL EDUCATION
ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION MODEL AND GUIDE
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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation is defined as carefully collecting information about a program or some aspect of a program in order to make necessary decisions about the program. Districts should focus on what they need to know to make program decisions and how they can accurately collect and understand that information to use it for decision-making.

PURPOSE OF GUIDE:

The purpose of this guide is to provide a model and examples of the components used in program evaluation to meet MSIP and Special Education compliance standards, as well as provide effective feedback in evaluating a district's special education program. This guide can be used as a planning tool in the development of an action plan for making decisions about ongoing professional development and program needs.

This guide offers:

- Guidelines to the basic components of conducting a program evaluation
- Questions to consider when completing each component of the program evaluation
- Examples of how the process unfolds, including a seven step drill down process to data analysis for use in evaluating program goals in a manner that leads to revealing root causes.

PROCESS & GUIDELINES

SPECIAL EDUCATION ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION MODEL AND GUIDE

PROCESS & GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AN ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS:

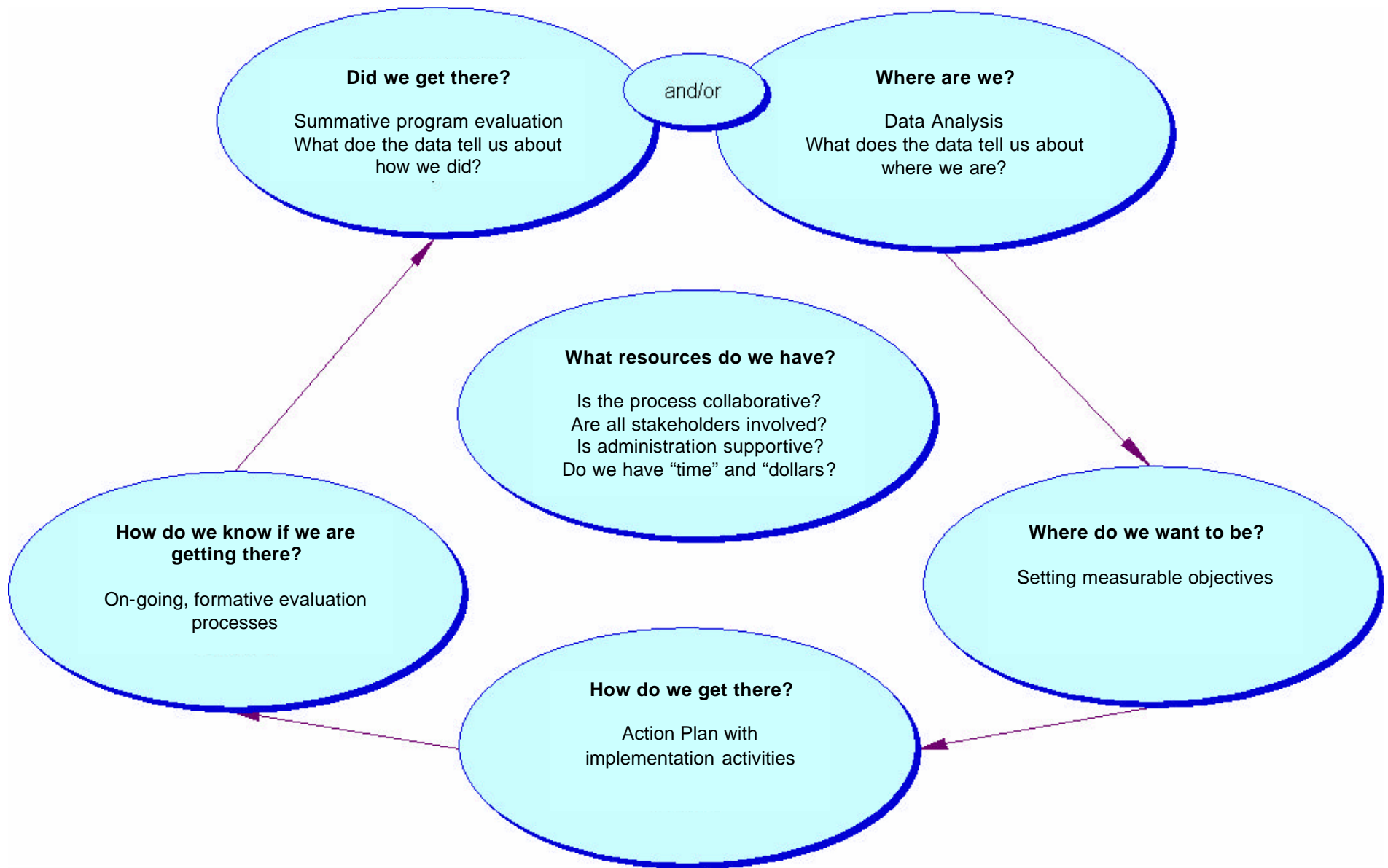
• Purpose s of Program Evaluation:

There are many purposes for conducting a program evaluation within a school or school district. The most common are to:

- Comprehensively understand how students are achieving
- Problem solve needed interventions
- Use it as a tool for improvement planning
- Understand cost benefits or cost effectiveness and efficiency
- Assess impact or monitor the program for improvement

Improvement planning, of course, encompasses all of these purposes in some respect or another. Districts should be engaged in a cycle of continuous school improvement. The following flowchart depicts how program evaluation fits into this cycle:

CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CYCLE



The district begins their Continuous School Improvement Cycle with "Where are we?" and progress through the cycle to "Did we get there?" However in the next cycle, "Did we get there?" is integrated into "Where are we?" and so forth. Hence, conducting an annual program evaluation is part of a district's ongoing process of improvement, including their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

• Requirements for Program Evaluation:

School districts are required to conduct an annual program evaluation. The State of Missouri has established eight goals for the performance of students with disabilities in Missouri. ***These goals must be included in the program evaluation conducted by each school district.*** For further information about these requirements, see *Missouri State Plan for Special Education-Section VII* and *Missouri Special Education Compliance Standards and Indicators, Document A - 102100: Program Evaluation Results*. A program evaluation is also required under the provisions of the Missouri School Improvement Program (see *MSIP Standards and Indicators Manual, Process Standard 8.1*).

These goals promote the purposes of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and are consistent, to the maximum extent appropriate, with goals and standards that have been established by the State of Missouri for all students. These eight basic goals can be categorized under three areas as follows:

School Entry:

- A. The performance level of children who receive special education services prior to age five will increase on the School Entry Profile.

Student Achievement:

- B. The percentage of students with disabilities in Grade 3 and 7 who are proficient readers will increase, while the percentage that have Missouri Assessment Programs - Communication Arts (MAP-CA) read to them will decrease.
- C. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring at the Step 1 and Progressing achievement levels will decrease, while the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at Proficient and Advanced will increase for each of the MAP subject area assessments.

Transition:

- D. The percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a regular diploma will increase.
- E. The percentage of students with disabilities that dropout of school will decrease.
- F. The percentage of students with disabilities participating in vocational preparation programs is consistent with the percentage of participation in the general population of students.
- G. The percentage of students with disabilities employed or enrolled in continuing education six months post vocational training will increase or be maintained at a high level.
- H. The percentage of students with disabilities employed or enrolled in continuing education six months post graduation will increase or be maintained at a high level.

• Components of Program Evaluation:

The basic components of any program evaluation may vary somewhat between organizations, but the process used is relatively the same. A sound process will yield useable information and thus serve as an impetus for making evidence based decisions. Guidelines to facilitate sound practices when conducting this process are outlined in the next section.

PROCESS GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AN ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

A. Program Description Guidelines

This part of the evaluation deals with preparing a basic description of the district's program prior to conducting the program evaluation. This information provides the context for appropriately evaluating data relative to program goals. Contextual considerations provide supplemental information which may not be readily apparent when reviewing and analyzing data thus facilitating appropriate conclusions.

• **COMPONENT A1: PROGRAM EVALUATION TEAM AND DATES OF ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS**

The process of conducting an annual program evaluation and the construction of a summary report is typically once a year over the course of several weeks; however, reviewing and evaluating program goals through data should be an ongoing process throughout the year. Additionally, the use of a multi-disciplinary team to conduct the evaluation will provide input from various viewpoints and perhaps ensure important considerations are not overlooked.

• **COMPONENT A2: TYPE OF PROGRAM**

Describe the programs and services your district provides.

• **COMPONENT A3: PROGRAM HISTORY** (Optional)

In order to make informed decisions, especially with regard to program evaluation, a district may need to know where they have been. This aids in understanding how and why decisions were made and thus provides insight into improvement planning.

Questions to Consider:

- Why does the program exist?
- What is the program's purpose?
- What is the program's mission?
- How is the program tied to school improvement?
- How is the program tied to specific standards?

• **COMPONENT A4: GRADE LEVELS**

A district's program varies considerably contingent upon grade levels served. For example, is your district a K-8 or K-12? If so what considerations have been made or will need to be made with regard to program evaluation.

• **COMPONENT A5: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES (CERTIFICATED & SUPPORT STAFF)**

This information provides more than just numbers – staff members are the primary resource through which program goals are implemented. Improvements are best carried out by staff members who are highly qualified, cognizant of their roles and vested in the process.

• **COMPONENT A6: PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING**

By specifying who and what positions are responsible for what data, the program evaluation team will know, not only know the data that are readily available, but from whom and from where to obtain it.

B. Program Evaluation Guidelines

This part of the evaluation deals with the eight basic components of the process used to evaluate the district's program (this process essentially tells us where we are going, where we are currently, how we are getting there (or not) and how we plan to get there).

• COMPONENT B1: PROGRAM GOALS

DESE Performance Goals and Indicators must be included in program evaluation for all school districts. The district will need to conduct a more thorough analysis of those for which concerns have been noted or suspected. The district will likely have other goals established based on priorities needed for improvement of previously identified concerns.

• COMPONENT B2: PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Objectives must be specific but also measurable via setting specific criteria, i.e. targets and benchmarks. **Evaluation of any program goal is contingent upon appropriate targets and benchmarks. Without them, the district cannot determine progress or slippage or thus identify areas needing improvement.**

Also, targets should not be set at the minimum criteria or floor level as mediocrity is not really an objective to be aspired to by any district. However, for compliance purposes, measurable objectives are not mandatory.

Questions to Consider:

- How will we measure progress toward meeting the performance goals?
- How will we know when we have met the goal?
- Are objectives written in measurable terms? What are the targets and benchmarks?

• COMPONENT B3: EVALUATION PROCEDURES/EVALUATION CRITERIA/DATA ANALYSES

The evaluation procedures and the criteria used to evaluate goals and objectives must be documented by a district for MSIP in a written procedural plan for evaluation of programs and services (see *Missouri School Improvement Program Standards and Indicators Manual*, Process Standard 8.1.1). Data analyses are an essential part of this process; without it, no evidence or basis exists for conclusions made by the team.

Data analyses serve a very important and crucial function to the process of evaluation. Evaluation without data analysis relies on assumptions and may result in the identification of spurious relationships rather than the true root causes. The identification of root causes furnishes direction for developing improvement strategies. In order to reveal and to understand the root causes, data from multiple sources¹ (i.e. demographics, student learnings, school processes and perceptions) need to be drilled down to comprehensively evaluate program goals (See *Special Resource Section: Document 2* for definitions).

Data Drill Down Process:

The data drill down process involves steps to identify what the data indicate and in turn steps to identify why. In brief, the seven step process is as follows.

What:

- o Step 1 - Collect data needed to evaluate program goal
- o Step 2 - Examine data and consider what to look for
- o Step 3 - Consider compliance implications and identify concerns

Why:

- o Step 4 - Identify other measures/questions to consider
- o Step 5 - Drill down data, analyze and consider implications
- o Step 6 - Identify gaps/additional information needed
- o Step 7 - Determine conclusions

¹ Bernhardt, Victoria. *Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement*. Larchmont: Eye on Education, 1998.

To assist with the data drill down process, the *Special Resource Section* contains the following documents:

- o Document 1: Data Analysis Examples (for student achievement and transition goal areas)
- o Document 2: Listings of Data For Consideration (includes places to find multiple measures of data and information)
- o Document 3: Questions to Facilitate Thinking Processes to Get to “Why”
- o Document 4: District Case Studies (using a data drill down process)

• **COMPONENT B4: COST ANALYSIS** (Optional)

Cost, as it relates to outcomes, can be an indicator of effectiveness or efficiency of a district's program goals. To the extent possible, districts should include actual performance data for the previous three fiscal years, projected performance for the current fiscal year, and targeted performance for the upcoming two fiscal years. In some instances, particularly for new program goals, there will not be any prior or current year performance measurement data. In these cases, districts should just include targeted performance for the upcoming two fiscal years. Comparative data (from other districts, states, the United States, or the private sector) should be included whenever possible. Measures are broken out into two categories - effectiveness and efficiency.

Effectiveness – Districts should include at least one measure of effectiveness. An effectiveness measure is a measure of the program's success or impact. Effectiveness measures demonstrate what a department hopes to achieve if a particular decision item is funded. Effectiveness should have been addressed and analyzed in Component B3.

Efficiency – Districts should include at least one measure of efficiency. An efficiency measure is a measure of the ratio of outputs to inputs. Efficiency measures target how districts can produce a good or deliver a service with the least amount of expense and time and with the least number of errors. Common efficiency measures include cost per unit measures (how much did it cost to produce the product or deliver the service), cycle times (how long did it take to produce the product or deliver the service), and accuracy rates (how many units of the product or service were produced without error; with no rework required).

Questions to consider:

- What are the direct and indirect costs?
- Are there any other costs?
- What is the cost per student?

• **COMPONENT B5: STRENGTHS/EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM BASED ON DATA ANALYSES**

What evidence, based on data analyses, suggests goals are met or exceeded as indicated by targets and benchmarks? Be mindful that targets and benchmarks should not be set at the minimum criteria or floor level as mediocrity is not really a strength, rather it may be a concern. Also, what other programmatic strengths were identified or emerged as a result of the evaluation?

Questions to Consider:

- What areas of the program are identified as successes?

• **COMPONENT B6: CONCERNS REGARDING PROGRAM BASED ON DATA ANALYSES**

What evidence, based on data analyses, suggests goals were not met as indicated by targets and benchmarks? What other programmatic concerns were identified or emerged as a result of the evaluation?

Questions to Consider:

- What areas of the program are identified as opportunities for growth or improvement?

• **COMPONENT B7: RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE GOALS**

Based on data analyses, specify recommendations that will most likely bring about the desired outcomes.

Questions to Consider:

- What level of results would we like to see in the next three years?
- Are there changes in the program that we want to make in the next three years?
- What changes are needed to achieve the targets set for program goals?
- In what ways would we like to improve the program?
- Are there program areas that we need to expand? Reduce?
- What are the areas for improvement?
- What are the needs for professional development?

• **COMPONENT B8: ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

Based on conclusions drawn from data analyses, develop an action plan to address areas needing improvement. Appendix E contains a fillable form to guide development, documentation and review of an action plan.

Questions to Consider:

- Do we need to develop an action plan to address concerns identified?
- What strategies do we use to affect change?
- What activities take priority?
- Do we need to revise the district CSIP?
- Do resources need to be reallocated?